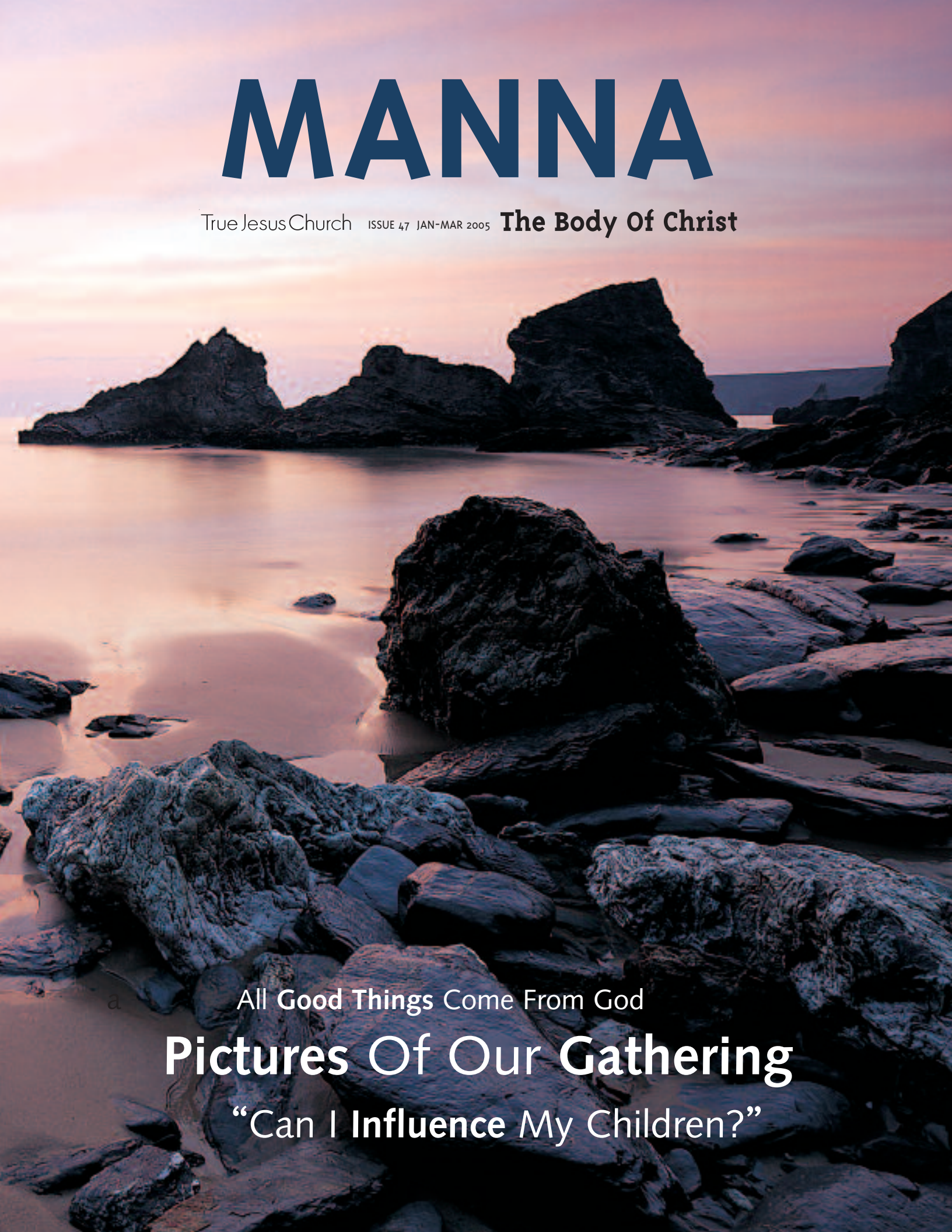
MANNA

True Jesus Church ISSUE 47 JAN-MAR 2005 **The Body Of Christ**



All **Good Things** Come From God

Pictures Of Our **Gathering**

"Can I **Influence** My Children?"

Dear Reader,

We wish that 2005 is off to a good start for all of you, and we are glad to bring you another issue of the Manna magazine!

This issue has been a true blessing to work on, and we hope you are able to reap from the writers' experiences.

I remember attending an evening service at my local church while we were working on this issue. The pastor happened to speak on the topic of the body of Christ, which is our current theme. He reminded the congregation that, although each of us asks and receives different gifts from God, spiritual gifts do not translate to good spirituality.

This is a good reminder and supplement to the theme articles for this issue. It is important for each of us to pursue spiritual growth so that we might benefit the rest of Christ's body and bring glory to Him.

Part of that spiritual growth is to learn patience, reliance, and trust in the Lord. And you will find these valuable lessons through the testimonies, exhortations, and column articles. Happy reading!

THE EDITOR

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The Body Of Christ

"The goal of Manna is to inspire believers to live an active faith through mutual encouragement and the study of biblical truths."

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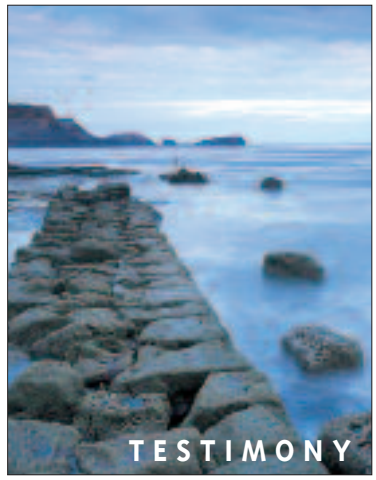

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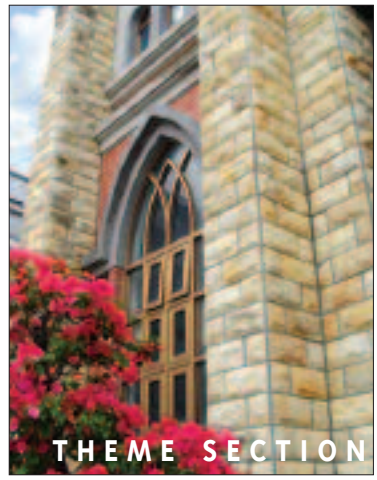

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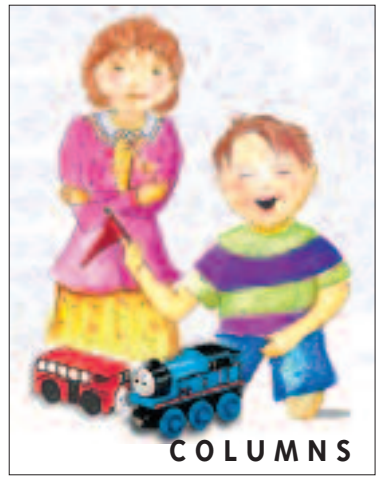

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Little Lamb Found

Yip Hon Lei—Manchester, United Kingdom

I really thank and praise the Lord that I am here today to share the miracles and wonders He has shown through me.

I used to feel very aimless because there were constant life questions that always came up empty and unanswered. I would find myself relating well to the cliché: a lost lamb walking in the shadow of darkness.

No matter what new skill or interest I found to fill the void, the momentary satisfaction of accomplishment was never enough. For years I searched for more.

A CHANCED MEETING

It was not until I went to university that I was acquainted with a girl who studied on the same campus. As our friendship ensued, our conversations gradually centred on God.

I was brought up in an environment of statues and rituals, and it was heavily enforced upon me because of my weak health. However, I was never truly convinced to faith in Buddhism, and I was seeking out a greater truth.

I have always believed in an unknown force greater than my predecessors' traditional values of idolatry. There must have been a beginning; the existence of a higher power incomparable to any human being that is beyond flesh.

Buddhists revere the idols they worship and elevate them to god-like status, but there are no manifestations of their god-like nature.

As my friend began to explain much of the teachings of Christianity to me, my eyes were opened and my heart sensed that I had found my way home. I steadily accepted the truth, and life was just commencing for me.

But during that period of time, my already-poor health worsened and I was constantly ill. By summertime, I was diagnosed with cancer.

MAKING THE MOST OUT OF A DIFFICULT TIME

Telling everyone was the hardest, and I prayed to God to lighten my load, which He did.

At that time, two church sisters privileged me with my own Bible on my birthday. I was so happy! That Bible never left my side. I constantly read it to

look for inspiration and encouragement in times of despair.

I even took it with me while I was undergoing chemotherapy. The long hours of waiting, taking blood tests, and getting my arm jabbed with needles was very tiring and time consuming.

But this was an opportune time for me to read up on the teachings of the Bible and I learnt much. Every word was as enlightening and inspiring as the next.

During treatment, I was advised not to return to university but I was unwilling to sit out an entire year. I did not want to waste time and submit myself to another defeat because of my health.

As soon as my condition stabilized after chemotherapy, I returned to school, even with the loss of my hair for all to see. And because of the drugs I was taking, something as simple as doing homework was extremely gruelling. But somehow I coped.

The only reason I was able to get through it all was because God walked with me the entire way, and His words were encouraging and comforting.

I constantly meditated on the Bible; steadily altering small habits to conform to His teachings and expectations, and I worked on my flaws and sought His acceptance.

I prayed constantly, not for God to heal me but to teach me of the way of the righteous and to live life as His child.

At such a difficult time, I was blessed to have found and accepted God in my life. If not, I do not think it would be possible to be able to endure such an ordeal alone.

But the best was yet to come, and I can surely attest that His grace does work in mysterious ways.

Touched by God's Grace

The results of the chemotherapy were very positive. Originally, I was scheduled for eight sessions of chemotherapy but the sessions were cut down to six, which is the minimum a cancer patient must receive to avoid a relapse.

I thanked God immediately. I knew that God was the One who was healing me from the start, and I was grateful because the sixth session of treatment was the worst one yet. According to doctors and previous patients, the degree of distress increases greatly with every session after the sixth.

The only reason I was able to get through it all was because God walked with me the entire way, and His words were encouraging and comforting.

By His grace, not only did He spare my life but He also spared me from enduring any further pain. God truly performs marvellous wonders!

I would not have believed it if anyone told me that the year I find God would be the year that I would be diagnosed with cancer and be cured from it.

God's timing is so perfect.

What I needed was the impossible, and God gave me His miracle.

Did God know what was to come for me, and so placed this sister in my life at that time? Yes, He did, and He sent His children ahead of me to guide me to Him.

I am, without a doubt, blessed and fortunate to be able to have found God, or the possibility of me being here today would be questionable.

He saved me, and there are no words or actions I could possible do to express my love and gratitude, accept to share my experiences with others.

SHOWERS OF BLESSING

A few months after my cancer was given the all-clear, I received the Holy Spirit—one more added blessing from God.

I wanted to be baptized straightaway, but a small doubt crossed my mind as to whether the True Jesus Church was the only church to follow. I had no doubt in God's existence; only to the obvious variety of churches that proclaim His name.

How do I know that I'm in the right church? I prayed for God to give me an answer in my heart to assure me. To my surprise, during a prayer, I felt my hands move and my right index finger wrote something on the palm of my left hand.

It was the words "True Jesus Church" and "Preach the Gospel". Enough said! I had not a single doubt about this church or my faith. Another blessing from God!

I was overwhelmed with happiness and joy I did not know what to do. The love of the Lord truly left me speechless and astonished.

Life was wonderful, but I think I took God's blessings for granted for a while and forgot to repay Him with thanksgiving. I also did not know how I could.

I was sharing my testimonies with my fellow sisters and non-believing friends, but I didn't think that was enough.

I wanted to do so much, but I had little faith in myself of what I could do.

Not having faith in ourselves means having little faith in God. I prayed for God to guide me in what I should do. Once again, in my prayer, He wrote on my palm "Psalms 111:7", which reads: "The works of His hands are verity and justice, All His precepts are sure."

What more can I say to that, other than to thank Him for His blessing, and to ask Him to guide me in His ways? As long as I walk the path He has opened, I will never have to worry or fear about the difficulty that may come.

May everyone be continually blessed in the Lord. If we are ever in doubt or heavily burdened, we can always seek counsel in prayer. There is no better way to find advice or guidance than through God Himself. He is listening.

A little lamb, a little lost,
Amongst those weary days,
A little time to cast a lot,
To guide me on my way,
In those times for me to try,
To prove my life—
I give to you.
For every time that I pray,
You enlighten me and give me life,
What more can I say?
To devote every day,
Just for You
The grace of the almighty—
His love, will keep me safe. ★

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How Do You Come Before God?
How should I pray in a manner that pleases God so that He would listen to my request and feel pleased with the content of my prayer? Am I praying the right way? How would I know?
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The End Of Our Road Is The Beginning Of God's Way

Shirley Lee—Baldwin Park, California, USA

Many people take the simple act of living for granted. For those who are ill and lack peace in their hearts, and for those who care for the sick, living is hardly simple. Time after time, God has watched over me, and He has given me the opportunity to share the blessings I have received from Him.

CHILDHOOD HEALTH TROUBLES

From the third day of my birth onward, I was taken to the emergency room twice a week because I was a very weak baby. I became a regular patient at the hospital, and it was extremely difficult to care for me as an infant.

Every time I tried to have a bowel movement, I would fall asleep from exhaustion. When the doctor became aware of my condition, I was about one month old. He examined me and discovered that a valve in my heart was not closing properly. He also highly recommended for me to have heart surgery. Otherwise, the heart defect might not heal on its own until I reached 4 years old, and everyday until then is a risk for possible heart failure.

My mom decided against the surgery, since she felt the operation was too dangerous due to my poor health. My mom prayed day and night for God to heal my illness, and she put her complete faith in God's hands. Since then, I don't have trouble going to the bathroom. This was the first time God saved me.

Following this, I developed an epidermal disease that affected the skin on my scalp, back, legs, and on other part of my body. I was examined and treated by several doctors, with little improvement.

My parents spent large sums of money searching for a cure but nothing worked. They even located the doctor that treated the wife of Taiwan's president at the time, and he charged ten times more than the regular doctor.

I went to this renowned doctor seven to eight times, but my condition did not improve. It was then that we realized that the end of our road is the beginning of God's way.

Once again, my mom decided to depend solely on God, for she believed everything had God's meaning and purpose. God listened to her prayers and my skin disease was healed.

Battling a High Fever

In my childhood years, my family migrated to Argentina. And in 1990, when I was about six years old, I returned to Taiwan for a visit over the summer break. We stayed at my paternal grandmother's house in the south of Taiwan. My siblings, my youngest aunt, and I slept in the same room, while my parents slept upstairs.

One night, I was feeling ill, so my aunt told me to go to bed earlier. It took me a while to fall asleep.

Later that night, I felt hot and uncomfortable. I wanted to call my sister and brother but they were sound asleep, so I decided not to disturb them. When it was around 5 or 6 a.m., my grandma quietly crept into the room to get her tai-chi sword for her morning exercises.

The weather was chilly, so she started to cover me with a blanket, only to realize that something was wrong because my face was as red as an apple. She touched my forehead and shrieked—waking everyone in the room. Then, she ran upstairs to call my parents.

Mom and Dad ran downstairs, carried me out of the room, and rushed me to the hospital. After the doctor took my temperature, he said to my parents, "Had you waited another thirty minutes, the high fever could've caused your daughter serious injury."

Apparently, my fever was only three to five degrees away from permanent damage. I really thank God for His good timing and for the amazing ways He sustained me.

Once again, my mom decided to depend solely on God, for she believed everything had God's meaning and purpose.

A WEAK BODY

Throughout my adolescence, God would see me through another major trial.

In 1997, I hit puberty and my menstrual cycles quickly became irregular. My family and my aunt thought I should see a doctor to make sure everything was all right.

The doctor told us that menstrual irregularity is common to girls just starting their cycle. But after some time had passed, my condition didn't improve.

I kept telling myself it was ok and convinced myself that it wasn't necessary to see a doctor. By 1998, my body became weaker and my face was a shade paler. I return to see the doctor.

She examined and charted my monthly cycle, prescribed medicine, and took ultrasounds, x-rays, and various blood tests. But the pills made me vomit in the middle of the night, and they prompted headaches and insomnia.

Since western medicine couldn't help, my uncle introduced me to an herbal doctor he knew.

The first herbal doctor shook his head and told my mom I was very weak. He sounded as if I would die in the next couple of months, and it only made my mom more anxious. My family didn't know how else to help me but to wait for a miracle to happen.

Initially, the Chinese medicine seemed to work. My countenance improved, I wasn't as exhausted, and my periods were more stable. But eventually, as we became hopeful, my menstrual cycle took another erractic turn. Once again, I lost hope and I burst into tears. I begged my family not to take me to another doctor. They were heartbroken and didn't know what to do with me.

A year later, in the summer of 1999, my uncle found an exceptional herbal doctor, and he encouraged me saying, "You can depend on God, but we need to do what we can." I agreed to see the doctor, but he said the same thing as the first doctor, only a little worse. I stopped seeing doctors altogether after that.

My health continued to fluctuate from bad to good, and from good to worse. And my hopes took a similar beating.

Relying On Prayer

Pastors always ask us to pray for those who are sick, but I never thought of myself in that category.

During the spiritual convocation in August 2000, when the pastor said, "Pray for those who are sick," I decided to pray for myself and ask God to heal me. It seems odd now, but throughout my physical ailments, I prayed to God more about school than I did about my health.

I never fully appreciated that I always had a Doctor that could heal all kinds of illness. From that day on, I started to pray to the Lord about my condition.

During the spiritual convocation the following year, my mom told me that she made a request to God—that if He would heal my illness, she or I would testify for the Lord.

My condition did improve after that, but it also took many nose dives. Has God really healed me? If He hasn't, I was very hesitant about testifying. So my mom comforted me saying, "Trust and have faith in God. You will be healed. Maybe God is testing your faith. Maybe after you testify, it will be healed."

I decided to testify at church in April 2002, and I also asked brothers and sisters to pray for me. When they heard about my condition, there were brothers and sisters who would ask my mom about my health, and every week, my mom would come home and tell me about it.

I was deeply touched, and I was more determined not to give up. "I'm not going to lose faith in God. I promised God and now all that's left is to pray until He heals me," I thought.

One of my mom's friends is a doctor, and she told us how difficult it is to treat menstrual irregularity, and she remembered that there was a lady in the Bible who had a similar illness. So she suggested to my mom that I should depend more on our God instead of doctors.

My mom observed that even a non-Christian, like her friend, knew not to depend on doctors, and she felt God had answered her prayers and spoken to her through this friend.

I understand now that when God answers our prayers, we don't always receive a direct answer. Sometimes, He speaks to us through others. My mom believed God used her friend to tell her that we needed to depend on Him for me to be cured.

Since April 2002, I truly thank God that I'm physically healthier. It is because of God's love and the love and prayers of my brothers and sisters that my body continues to grow stronger.

Most importantly, God has given me His assurance throughout these past few years, and I am certain and I believe that our health and well-being lies completely in His hands. Though He did not remove this burden completely for me, He leaves it there to remind me to constantly rely on Him, and to put my trust in Him.

Though there are difficult turns in our walk through life, we are blessed because we walk with the Lord.

BELIEVE, AND WE WILL BE HEALED

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 tells us that everything needs time. My family, relatives, and I did everything we could, but it was God who helped me and graced me with what He thinks is sufficient for me. Though there are difficult turns in our walk through life, we are blessed because we walk with the Lord.

God has chosen us and saved us. This means He will sustain us no matter how many difficulties we will go through or face. He will hold our fragile hands and guide us until our last days. Therefore, we should not let our troubles overcome us (Jn 14:1).

I truly thank God because this illness let me realize how much people care about me. It made me appreciate my family because they have walked with me through hopelessness and depression, and they have encouraged and supported me all this time.

My experience also taught me that group prayers are very powerful. Even though I feel down at times, I know if God doesn't push me, my faith won't improve and I will forget to cherish His love for me.

For those who are encountering illnesses and trials, I encourage you not to give up. We need to have hope and wait patiently for God's miracle (cf. Rom 8:24-25). We also need to put our trust in the Lord Jesus because He has told us: "And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Mt 21:22).

May all the glory be unto our heavenly Father. ★

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Whether you are studying the Bible on your own or leading a small-group Bible study, the Bible Study Guide helps you focus on individual passages, discover God's truths, and apply the teachings to life. By going through the exercises and questions in each lesson, you and your study group can study the Bible in-depth.

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Q&A on the BASIC BELIEFS

Have you run into questions you couldn't answer when you tried to share the gospel? Maybe you're still skeptical of the Christian faith and have many questions. Q&A on the Basic Belief is a handy resource that gives concise and to-the-point answers to the most frequently asked questions about basic truths.

All Good Things Come From God

Ana Weng—Buenos Aires, Argentina

IT STARTED WITH A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

It never occurred to me that I would still have so much to learn about the Lord Jesus and about the truth behind salvation, since I've been a Christian my whole life.

After my mom married my father, he brought her family the truth about the Sabbath day, as he belongs to the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Everyone thought the truth behind Sabbath was good and they all believed.

After a few years and while I was a young girl, I happened to read a newspaper article that claimed they had the truth. So I went to my grandmother and said, "Grandma, this newspaper article says there is a church that's truer than yours, and it's called the True Jesus Church."

She turned up her ears and was very curious about what the article had to say. After I had read her the article, she decided to go to the church to find out more. After learning that this church observed the Sabbath and had the Holy Spirit, she decided to bring her family to attend service.

My uncle and aunt were the first to follow my grandmother to the True Jesus Church, but they couldn't accept that the church preached they are the way to salvation. Then my grandma brought me along.

At first I was skeptical about the church. When it came time for prayer, I felt uncomfortable after they asked me to go to the front to kneel with the others.

I went home and told my mom about the strange prayers at this church, and she was the last person in the family to go to this church. Incidentally, my mom's visit coincided with the church's spiritual convocation. During those few days of special services, God opened her heart and when she heard the truth, she was convinced that this was the true church.

She was baptized and also received the Holy Spirit. At that time, I was still unsure and continued to attend service and to study the truth with them.

It Lead to the Best Gift

After a period of time, God moved me to realize that having the Holy Spirit is directly related to our salvation, so I began to pray diligently to receive it. Half a year passed and another spiritual convocation was coming up, and I continued to pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the convocation, the pastor also reminded the members to pray for a sister who had scoliosis, which is an abnormal curving of the spine. Her condition was very serious and she had to go overseas for surgery. So I put aside my pursuit of the Holy Spirit and started to pray for her.

But I felt weak and without strength in my prayers, so I asked God to please give me His strength so that I could pray. When I prayed with this request, I felt the floor beneath me begin to shake. After the prayer, I talked with the pastor's daughter and told her what had happened.

She turned to the book of Acts in the Bible, where it recorded the same phenomenon when the apostles were praying during the Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit came down and filled them. After hearing this, my faith in God was strengthened. I was baptized during that spiritual convocation, although I did not receive the Holy Spirit.

After the convocation, I would pray in the morning, during lunch time, and even in the evening. My mom noticed that I was constantly going upstairs to my room and she asked me what I was doing. I told her that I was praying for the Holy Spirit, and she said, "Let's pray together."

We knelt down side by side, and she prayed to the Lord and asked Him:

God, when she was born I gave this child everything. The Bible says that if parents would give the very best to their children, wouldn't the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit and everything good for His children? This daughter of mine is newly baptized into You and now belongs to You. Please give her Your best.

Before she was done praying this, I received the Holy Spirit! From that moment on, I felt so joyful and I would love to pray, and I would sing hymns as I walked along the road. I developed a great love of Bible reading and would even read the Scriptures on the bus. I truly felt the love and joy of the Lord, and there was no more doubt that I have come into the house of God.

Everyone was wondering, "Who was this girl who placed first?" I was delighted to tell them that I prayed my way through the exams.

THE PRESSURES OF MEDICAL SCHOOL

I was also preparing to enter college around that time. Most of my relatives are physicians, so naturally they encouraged me to go to medical school. I didn't have that much interest in medicine but I didn't know what else to study, so I decided to follow in their footsteps.

In Argentina, the first year of college is actually a preliminary year of general courses. Thankfully, the Lord helped me pass that year quite easily. The second year was when things got tough, where class sizes were reduced significantly, and many students failed or dropped out.

The professors gave us a huge list of expensive textbooks to buy, and each one was very thick. When I saw the stack of books sitting in my room, I became discouraged and had thoughts to study something else instead.

But I decided to entrust everything to God and prayed that if this was His will, He would help me pass the exams. If He would help me, I decided that I would work for the Lord. And if He didn't think that medical school was suitable for me, I prayed that He would not let me pass the exams and would open a new road for me.

I was very close to God at that point in my life because I had just received the Holy Spirit, and I put God as my first priority and school a comfortable second. I was praying and reading the Bible frequently and I enjoyed the blessing of keeping the Sabbath.

When I couldn't grasp certain concepts in class or during my studies, I would kneel down and pray and God would literally turn on a light bulb in my mind to help me understand. So even though those were stressful and tiring times, I was very joyful and thankful in the Lord because He was with me.

I was very nervous as the first round of exams encroached in sophomore year, and I was very thankful when I found out that I came in first place in my class. Everyone was wondering, "Who was this girl who placed first?" I was delighted to tell them that I prayed my way through the exams.

After my classmates heard my testimony and saw how well I was doing at school, they went to their church to

pray, too. This opened a channel for me to preach and I was very joyful I could testify to them.

Forgetting My Priority

Slowly, though, my prayers became weaker as I put more emphasis on my studies rather than on my relationship with God. Medical school became increasingly demanding over the years, and I wanted so much to maintain a high standing in the class. I began to shift focus from daily Bible reading and prayer to allow myself more time for school.

After a period of time, I even started to fall asleep after a short "Hallelujah." I began to feel the burden of going to church every week, and when I read the Bible I would find the shortest chapters to read. When exams fell on Mondays, I would struggle whether I should go to church over the weekend, since all my friends would be studying at home and making good use of Saturday and Sunday to get ahead.

When the preacher's sermon went overtime, I would constantly look at my watch and agonize over when he would finish. I was very aware that my faith was going downhill; at some point, I even wondered if God was still with me.

By the fifth year of medical school, I was depending completely on myself to study, though in theory I still remembered that our strength comes from the Lord.

That year, I had to take a microbiology course and it was one of the toughest hurdle in our curriculum. Many students had to retake it more than once. I think I was probably a little out of my mind by then. Even though I knew that it was such a difficult class to pass, I was very determined to pass the class the first time through with a high grade. I demanded more and more of myself and gave myself a lot of pressure to perform well.

One time, while I was studying, I suddenly couldn't breathe and my heart was beating very fast. I felt as if I was going to die. I went to the school clinic the next day, and the doctors told me to take some time to relax and to schedule an appointment with the psychologist, which I did.

I was skeptical about psychology but I went anyway since it is quite a common thing in this day and age. I saw a couple of psychologists but I felt that those sessions did not benefit me at all. So I went to see a psychiatrist, who prescribed medicine that made me throw up. Needless to say, that was a terrible time in my life.

I was very aware that my faith was going downhill; at some point, I even wondered if God was still with me.

One night, I couldn't sleep so I opened my eyes and stared at the ceiling for a long time. Then I opened my Bible and my eyes fell on a passage in the book of Psalm, which reads:

It is vain for you to rise up early,
To sit up late,
To eat the bread of sorrows;
For so He gives His beloved sleep.
(Ps 127:2)

It comforted me to know that God grants sleep to those whom He loves and who are close to Him, and it made me realize how ungodly I had become. I got up to pray that night and the Holy Spirit filled me, and I was able to go to bed afterwards.

PUTTING THINGS BACK INTO PERSPECTIVE

When our resident pastor heard about my problems, he paid me a visit and admonished me to shift my focus back to God, as all things in our life has God's good will in it. So I quieted down and reflected on my relationship with God, and I marveled at how far I have distanced myself from Him. I also remembered the old promises I made with God to serve Him, and I felt very ashamed and humbled.

Then I realized that our weaknesses are not a sudden change of character but a slow and subtle downhill demise. This is also why we need to renew ourselves in the Lord and build on that relationship day by day. We simply cannot overlook the importance of daily spiritual cultivation because by the time we identify with the symptoms, we're already too far from Him.

I decided to take a semester off from school, and I spent that time praying and reading the Bible. I asked the Lord to open a path for me and to have mercy on me, and these were the two deepest impressions I learned in that time—God's mercy and His loving good will.

One night, while I was praying at home, I asked God to teach me what to do. I was wondering if perhaps God doesn't want me to continue with my

studies anymore, but in my prayer I was comforted by God's answer that His grace is sufficient and His strength is made perfect in those who are weak. God's answer was full of compassion and love. Realizing this, I set the determination that no matter what I do from then on, I would rely on Him and not on myself.

After a while, I got better and was able to smoothly transition back to school and the pressures of exams. I had only three weeks to prepare for the final exam of that dreaded microbiology class (most people take two months to study for it). In those three weeks, I prayed diligently every time before studying.

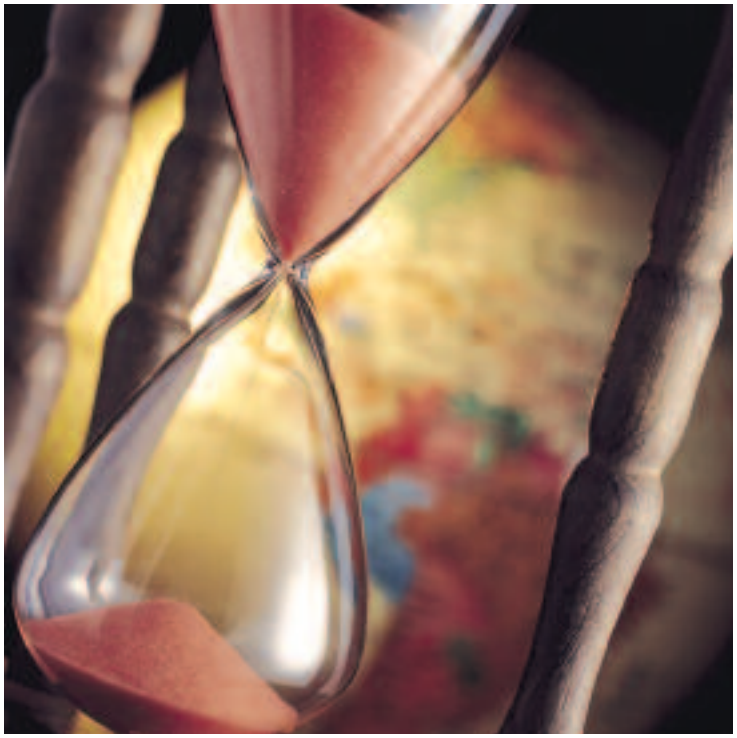
I understand that what God requires of us is to put Him first in our lives and to love Him—to know to rely on Him and acknowledge that it is through Him that we are able to do anything.

Since I didn't have much time to study, I went into the exam with God in my heart. To my surprise, I received the highest grade in the class. Everyone was flabbergasted at how I could do this because I only had three weeks to study so much material. But I knew very clearly that it was God who gave this to me.

Through this experience, I understand that what God requires of us is to put Him first in our lives and to love Him—to know to rely on Him and acknowledge that it is through Him that we are able to do anything.

I have since graduated from medical school and I'm doing my residency in Buenos Aires right now. Though the academic period of my studies are over, the lessons I've learned about life and what is important in life are priceless. Indeed, all good things do come from God. For me, it began with a small little newspaper article.

May all glory and praise be unto our heavenly Father. Amen. ★



Patience In Waiting

Johanna Bloom

The world we live in is very fast paced. We demand computers with clocks that are so fast we are running out of prefixes to describe their speed. We are on the lookout for the internet service provider that can offer speedy download rates, as well as lots of bandwidth. People prefer cars with bigger and more powerful engines, so that they can get that surge of acceleration when the traffic light goes from red to green. Delivery services that offer one- or two-day shipping thrive in our society.

We have come to expect that things should be faster and done according to specification. Naturally, with everything speeding up, we have become progressively more impatient as people. While it may be acceptable to expect our perception of time to escalate with the pace of today, this kind of impatience cannot translate to our relationship with other people, and, in particular, our relationship with God.

Even though communication through email and phone calls have sped up the process of conveying information, the amount of time it takes for a person to process that information in his/her brain remains relatively constant. For instance, it takes the same amount of time for a person to burst out in a smile while reading a joke, an email, or a handwritten letter.

With this in mind, we have to re-examine our attitude towards patience in this fast-paced world. For starters, our ability to wait for something to happen is not an attribute that is antiquated or left behind in the dust.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING PATIENT

One question to consider is "Why is it better to be patient than impatient?" First of all, impatience is a bit like being in denial of the fact that some things take a set amount of time to occur and cannot be expedited.

For instance, in spite of genetic engineering, it still takes fruit trees years to grow and a few months to bear ripe fruit. An experienced farmer understands this and waits patiently for the fruit to ripen. Someone less experienced may pick the fruit early and find not only that the fruit is unripe and sour but also that he wasted his effort on harvesting a crop that was not ready.

The Bible tells us that God makes all things beautiful in His time. If we are unwilling to wait for a particular event in our lives to come to fruition, we run the risk of ruining the beautiful plans God has for us.

Consider Abraham's wait for his promised son. God promised childless Abraham at the age of seventy-five that he would be the father of a great nation (Gen 12:2). Abraham waited and waited until he was eighty-five, and then he and his wife decided to take the matter into their own hands. The result: Ishmael was born to Abraham through Sarah's maidservant.

But according to God's promise, Sarah gave birth to Isaac when Abraham was one hundred years old. The situation soon became very delicate, and Abraham had to make the decision to send Ishmael away because of the rising conflict between Sarah and her maidservant.

Even though God did grant Abraham the son that He had promised, the glorious anticipation of Isaac's birth was clouded over with the shame of sending away another child, and all because of a couple's impatience.

This serves as a reminder to us that when we "force" an event to occur prematurely, the result is not as good as if we had waited for the situation to mature on its own or take its natural course.

The Bible also gives us concrete reasons why patience triumphs over impatience: "A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly" (Prov 14:29).

Furthermore, patience is considered a virtue of the strong in character and not a crutch of the weak-willed.

An impatient person will rush through a matter in order to achieve the end result sooner. A person who is patient gives himself time to think a matter through before he acts. We know that when we think before we act, our actions are more thorough and our speech more intelligent. Hasty actions yield results of poor quality, and we end up spending more time fixing our mistakes than if we had spent the extra time to think things through beforehand. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of remedy.

Furthermore, patience is considered a virtue of the strong in character and not a crutch of the weak-willed. This is an attitude that is counterintuitive based on our experiences in society and merits a reminder from time to time.

"Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city" (Prov 16:32). Warriors are individuals that are highly trained and very brave. They act only out of duty and do not dabble in petty matters. Likewise, developing patience is a process that requires self-discipline and constraint. One who is able to complete this training is as strong in character as a warrior is skilled in battle.

THE FRUSTRATIONS OF THE ONE WHO WAITS

Even though being patient is more beneficial than being impatient, it does not mean it isn't frustrating to wait for something you really want to happen to happen. It is discouraging when something we plan goes awry and events fall out of our control, often forcing us to postpone, or even cancel, our plans. We often pray to God for this and this to happen as soon as possible or at a time we specify. When our prayers are not answered to our expectation, we feel like God has left us out of His care. Let's think about this a little more, though.

Remember those stories from your childhood about a person who rubs a lamp and this genie pops out and offers him three wishes? Of course, the person thinks this is his lucky day and makes his demands. Wouldn't it be nice if God operated in a similar fashion and granted us everything we prayed for?

The answer is, of course, no. In those genie stories, what almost always ends up happening is that the person making the wishes muddles up the first two

wishes and uses the third wish to undo his errors.

Also, consider a scenario in which a group of near-sighted friends travel together to an unfamiliar place. Which person would most likely be the designated navigator? Certainly not the most myopic person! The group would pick the one with the sharpest vision to read all the signs and lead the group.

In comparison to God, our foresight is near blind. God has the view of eternity; we can't even see beyond the next second. God knows the whole universe like the back of His almighty hand, and none of us can profess to know the entire terrain of our earth. Given this, why would we insist on our timetable and plans more than submitting to God's timetable and plans?

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:9). This being so, we may lay our frustrations to rest and patiently wait for God's timetable to play out its course. We need not feel discouraged that something did not occur at the time we wanted it, because we know that God's foresight will ensure that everything will occur at the optimal time.

"We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised" (Heb 6:12).

Chronic impatience is a symptom that calls our attention to a weakened spirituality.

While we wait on God's time, we should continue to abide in the Lord by keeping His commands and remaining prayerful. Trusting in God's love and impeccable foresight is a source of joy during our time of watching and waiting.

THE LINE WHERE THE WAITING ENDS

We may discover that even the most patient person has his limits. At some point, the waiting period needs to end. How do we know at what point we should just "give up" on waiting and move on without the object of our longing?

Look at the question from another angle: what defines how much patience we have? Answering this question will help us delineate where our patience runs out.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness…" (Gal 5:22)

This verse tells us that patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is something that is evident in a person who has the Holy Spirit. We can gauge our fullness of the Spirit by how evident these characteristics are in our lives. The more we allow the Spirit to guide us, the more love, joy, peace and patience we have. In other words, the degree of our patience is directly related to the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Our patience runs out when the movement of the Holy Spirit weakens. If upon self-examination we find that we lack in patience, this finding also indicates that we are lacking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Chronic impatience is a symptom that calls our attention to a weakened spirituality. This can be remedied with vigilant prayers and petition to God, asking Him to fill us with His Spirit. Naturally, when we are filled with God's Spirit, the line at which our patience runs out disappears.

The extent to which we can endure and wait is most governed by how much assurance we have that what we are waiting for will occur. To illustrate, let's consider the scenario where we are waiting for a bus to arrive. Suppose the bus is running late, and you and the other would-be passengers start to wonder, will it ever show up? Five minutes go by, ten minutes go by, and one by one, passengers will leave, starting with those with the least faith in the public transit system, ending with the person who has the most faith that the bus will come.

The level of a person's belief that the bus will come dictates the amount of time he is willing to wait. Likewise, the amount of faith we put in God's provision is directly related to how long we are willing to wait on His schedule. Why can we believe that God will grant us what we need in a timely manner? Something to think about is all the times in the past when God did not grant what we wanted at the time we wanted, and recall how He guided us in a way we did not expect.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4. 6-7)

All of us, upon careful introspection, will find that God very frequently provides for us in ways that exceed our expectation. Furthermore, if we lovingly

submit to God's commands, we will always remain in His careful protection. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28).

By recalling God's blessings and remembering that He always looks out for the benefit of His children, we have every assurance that although He may not provide for us in the way we want, ultimately His provision is the best. When God appears on the scene later than we expect, we should not be the ones who gave up on Him, like the passengers who didn't think the bus would ever arrive. Instead, we are able to wait because we know He will come to our aid.

So the question we posed, "Where is the line where I can stop waiting?" now becomes, "How do I push that line to the horizon, where I am willing to submit to God's will?"

In Hebrews 11, we read about the patriarchs and prophets, whose faith knew no boundaries. They believed and lived by God's promises to the day they died. Some never saw the fulfillment of God's promise to them in their lifetimes, and yet they believed.

Our patience is bound by our faith in God's promises. When our patience runs out while waiting for God to show us His way, it means we have lost faith in God. While it is not easy to endure the seemingly eternal time it might take for something we want to happen, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2), will give us the strength to be patient.

Basically, the length of time we are willing to wait for God boils down to whether we truly believe in our hearts that God will fulfill our requests, and whether our hearts are open to the fact that God may fulfill our requests in an alternative way, and perhaps even at an alternative time.

When our patience runs out while waiting for God to show us His way, it means we have lost faith in God.

Just because we eagerly anticipate the next technological gadget does not mean we ought to apply this same sense of impatience to our expectations from God. Some things just take time to come to maturity and to show restraint, while waiting demonstrates strength of character and keen understanding.

To rush a matter is to invite trouble, and very often the result is not optimal. God knows what the optimal time is, so we should not presume to know more than He does by jumping the gun. Rather, we can rely comfortably on His omniscience and omnipotence to provide us with all we need. Since God will always provide for those who love Him, we will find the strength to wait for His provision through the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

The only boundaries we have are the ones delineated by our lack of faith and insufficient movement of the Holy Spirit. Through constant prayer, we can invite the Holy Spirit to dwell in us more fully and cultivate a life in which we have faith in God's love for us.

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (Rom 12:12). Let the world rush by, and let others chase after the changing winds. Let the pace of life around us spin itself into a frenzy, faster and faster, leading to a whirlpool that instead of propelling up, sucks down.

In a society where the demand for speed results in unhealthy compromises, let us remember that when we patiently allow room in our lives for our Lord, we will find our hopes fulfilled in His time. ★

Bowing Down in Adoration and Surrender

Stephen Ku—Pacifica, California, USA

It's interesting to see the huge varieties in the way people worship. Some worship in total silence, while others sing and dance. Some raise their hands as they pray, while others get on their knees.

In the Bible, worship commonly involves prayer, offering of sacrifices, songs of praise, or the reading of the law. From these acts of worship derived the form of Christian worship we are familiar with today.

When we speak of worship, we commonly associate it with outward actions such as singing, prayer, and listening to sermons. But, from God's perspective, these external expressions alone do not constitute true worship. So what does it mean to worship God? How should we worship God and let our worship be acceptable to Him?

It would be helpful to first re-examine the meaning of the word "worship." The word "worship" means "prostrate oneself in homage." It is a term that describes the action of a person bowing down before someone great. It is a sign of total humility and devotion. The Bible often uses this word in this sense.

But the true essence of worship is not in the outward bowing down, but the bowing down of the inner person. The place of worship is not nearly as important as the place of our hearts.

To those who only paid attention to the outward form of worship but forgot the true meaning of worship, this is what the Lord has to say:

These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. (Mt 15:8-9)

True worship is a heart-felt response to God's greatness. It is the adoration of God and complete surrender from the heart. God cares much more about what drives us in our worship than the motions we go through in our worship.

WORSHIP BEGINS WITH ADORATION

To worship is to be in complete awe of God. Our only motivation to worship should be God. What brings us to our knees is our adoration of Him. Because His love, power, and wisdom are so far greater than ours, we are naturally moved to bow down to Him. If our worship is driven by anyone or anything other than God, it is not true worship. God alone inspires our worship. When we truly think about and feel who God is and what He has done for us, we cannot but fall prostrate before Him.

When I pray, I tend to have a habit of going through a list of thank-you's and requests to God. Perhaps this is better than day-dreaming in prayer. But it's easy for my prayers to fall into a series of mindless repetitions. When that happens, I am actually worshipping as an obligation rather than out of adoration for God. This kind of worship becomes superficial.

Have you ever experienced a moment when you felt in your heart that God is so awesome and great, and that you are so small and worthless? That's how Peter felt before Jesus Christ. When

he and his fellow fishermen had done what Jesus told him and let down the net, they caught such a great number of fish that the net was breaking. There were so many fish that they filled two boats and the boats almost sank! At that moment, Peter fell down at Jesus' knees, feeling completely worthless and sinful, and he asked the Lord to depart from him (Lk 5:8). No one told him to fall down before Jesus, but he did so because he was in awe in the presence of the Almighty God.

This is the way the psalmists in the Bible worshipped God. When they consider God's loving mercy, His mighty deliverance, His works in nature, they marveled. From their inner most being, they cried out to God in adoring wonder.

Every moment of our lives is an occasion to worship.

We can also experience this awe when we devote ourselves to God's word and prayer. The times when I truly felt God's presence in my prayers, all I could do and wanted to do was to praise God continually. There was no need for words. Pleas and requests felt out of place. In moments like these, I felt God's infinite and indescribable greatness. His power and love completely enveloped me. His Holy Spirit gave wings to my prayer and lifted me directly to God's mercy seat. An overwhelming sense of humility and gratitude just takes over. Hallelujahs just kept flowing from my heart out of my mouth, whether in the form of loud cries or spiritual songs.

It is no wonder that the living creatures, the elders, the angels, and the multitude in John's vision could not stop praising God before His throne. It is no wonder that they continually fell down before the throne to worship.

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever. (Rev 5:11-14)

Now, this is true worship. They were in such awe of the everlasting Lord God for His greatness, that they worshiped Him day and night. From their heart, they gave thanks and praise to the Lamb who was slain.

Sometimes, we feel uninspired even though we read the Bible, sing, and pray. This is because our hearts have not entered the King's throne-room. We have not lifted our eyes to behold God's beauty and splendor. We are too busy to appreciate His mighty works of creation or the miracles we take for granted. We have forgotten to take note of the nail prints in His hands and the reason why they are there.

But if you take the time each day to ascend into God's presence, He will inspire you and move your heart. Quiet your spirit and come before His feet to hear His words. Turn away from the short-lived attractions of the world and look towards His face. You will marvel at His works and His will. Give Him all your burdens and anxieties, and sit in His loving embrace. He will speak tenderly to you and comfort your soul with His Spirit.

God's throne-room is always open. Every moment of our lives is an occasion to worship. Even when you're not on your knees in prayer or holding a Bible, you can still offer to God a true worship. Come into God's presence at any moment. He will never fail to inspire you, be it through a word of encouragement, a reminder of His eternal love, or a warm embrace by His Spirit. There and then, you will fall down before Him in humble adoration.

WORSHIP ENDS WITH SURRENDER

The natural response of adoration for God is total surrender.

In John's heavenly vision, the twenty-four elders sat on thrones, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads (Rev 4:4). They had been given great honor and glory. However, John records that as they fell down "before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne." (Rev 4:10). The word "cast" means "throw." These elders threw their crowns of gold when they worshiped God! Before the majestic and splendor of God, the only place fit for their crowns was the ground.

Before our Lord Almighty, our treasures become rubbish (cf. Phil 3:8); our wisdom becomes foolishness; our

strength becomes weakness (cf. 1Cor 1:25); and our righteous garments become filthy rags (Isa 64:6). As we come into the sanctuary and bow down to the King of kings, we cannot but confess our utter insufficiency and cast before His throne everything that makes us proud.

Our Lord Jesus taught us that true worship does not depend on where we worship but whether we worship in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:21-24). On the one hand, God wants us to bow before Him not only outwardly, but sincerely with our spiritual being and in complete truthfulness.

One the other hand, and taking our worship a genuine step further, it is important for us to surrender our spirits to His spirit and our truthfulness to His truth. Sincerity is not enough. A person can be sincerely wrong. We cannot worship and serve God according to our own ways and will; we must surrender to His ways and His will. That is worship, and it is a daily action.

Paul, likewise, explains worship in terms of total surrender of ourselves to God.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom 12:1-2)

Worship is to let go of ourselves and let God take control in our lives. It means conforming to God's ways rather than to popular culture.

Many times God's ways and wills are far beyond what we can understand. We can only humbly submit to them with an attitude of awe. As Paul expounded on God's election, he could not help but exclaim with praise and reverence:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

"*For who has known the mind of the LORD?*
Or who has become His counselor?"
"*Or who has first given to Him"*
And it shall be repaid to him?"

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. (Rom 11:33-36)

God's thoughts and ways are so much higher than ours. He sees from eternity to eternity, but we don't even know about tomorrow. He upholds the whole creation with His powerful word, whereas we cannot even add an inch to our stature. We can only entrust ourselves completely to our Maker and Lord.

Even when calamities strike us, true worshipers of God continue to bow their knees before Him. Job was such a worshipper.

Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said:

"*Naked I came from my mother's womb,*
And naked shall I return there.
The LORD gave, and the LORD has take away;
Blessed be the name of the LORD."
In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. (Job 1:20-22)

Job's worship was one of total surrender. In the midst of sudden tragedy, he fell to the ground in worship and offered praise to the Lord. He submitted to God's sovereign will, without a word of complaint or resentment. This is the kind of true worshipper that the Father seeks.

As we come into sanctuary and bow down to the King of kings, we cannot but confess our utter insufficiency and cast before His throne everything that makes us proud.

A LIFE OF WORSHIP

Worship is not confined to the walls of a chapel. It does not only start or end with church services. Rather, it is a life-long bowing down of our hearts before God, adoring Him and surrendering ourselves completely to Him. A worshipper of God worships before the throne day and night, not just when he is in a church building.

Our God is the very reason for our existence. To him and through him and for Him are all things. He is worthy of all glory and honor.

May every day of our lives be filled with praise, thanks, and wonder. May our entire being be humbly dedicated to God for His service. ★

The Body Of Christ

When we think about the body of Jesus Christ, the first image that often comes to mind is the vision of the crucifixion—the body that was so brutally tortured and unconscionably nailed on the cross. And rightly so, for through His battered body and through His death, life was made possible to us.

What kind of life did our Lord Jesus give us? He gave us His life so that we might live. He is the life in our fellowship, in our gathering, and in our service to Him. He has made each of us a member of His precious body. He has entrusted us to build upon this body, and He has promised to sustain us with His life.

Therefore, it is vital that we strive to understand our role in His body, be actively responsible for its welfare, and to bring glory to Christ Jesus, who is our head and the one we live for.

Pictures Of Our Gathering

Based on a sermon by HH Ko—Heidelberg, Germany

They say that a picture is worth a thousand words, and it is not a wonder why the historical events that took place long before our time become beautiful images in our minds, as we read and envisage how they are described in the Bible.

There are three particular events described in the Bible that helps us understand ourselves and each other, the roles we play as His body, and how we ought to gather in His name. We should remember these events, so we can encourage and remind one another that we are one small but precious part in the whole of His church.

THE PORTRAIT OF THE ARK

The time of Noah was a time of great tragedy, and God was very sorrowful at the wickedness of the people, for the world was thoroughly corrupted. But in that nefarious environment, the Lord chose one family, and He blessed this family very much.

God told Noah to build an ark, which was basically a very large box, with a specific length, width, and height. Then, Noah and his family lived in that ark because it was through this ark that they would be saved.

When we gather together, it is like coming together as one family into the ark. We know that this church of the end times has been called to save. In fact, there aren't many of us, just as there were only eight in Noah's time that received salvation.

One of the specifications of Noah's ark was the door situated on the side,

which received Noah's entire family. This tells us that the ark receives the household as a unit. When a family gathers in God's name, that home is also a church (cf. Rom 16:5).

The Israelites were closest to God during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and the love they had for God during that period of time was what God remembered most.

At the top of the ark, God also specified the installation of a window, which would be the only source of light for all who were shut inside the ark for more than one hundred days.

This teaches us that when we are together, we are entering into the spiritual ark, whose conditions are similar to the one Noah built. Outside the ark is a flood, and if we exit there is death awaiting us.

If we remain inside, our patience comes through that window above—our source of light and our hope of something much better in heaven. Therefore, let us keep ourselves in the love of God, which we witness everyday as we dwell in the ark He has made for us.

Entering through the Side Door

Similarly, our family and the extended family of the church are models of the first ark, and through God's love we are able to enter the side door and to receive one another. Therefore, we also need to learn to dwell together.

Animals of every kind, size, and shape entered this one door, no matter how big or small they were. The mouse wouldn't say to the elephant, "Why are you taking up so much room?"

Inside the church, it is easy to become puffed up because we have seemingly contributed much more to the church, and we might feel there is an inequality of merit with regards to who gets to come into the ark.

Paul, when he realized this problem, said:

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which is not lawful for a man to utter. (2 Cor 12:2-4)

What Paul encountered was something most believers would not or have not gone through. He had a very deep spiritual experience of God's presence in the third heaven, where he also heard inexpressible words in that Paradise.

It would've been easy to feel spiritually lifted above others, or for others to lift him up after such an encounter. But Paul, in his humility, reckoned that is why the Lord inflicted him with a thorn in his flesh, to humble him and to allow him to enter through the side door.

Therefore, no matter how great or small we are, we must know ourselves and learn to appreciate others because God has allowed each of us to enter this ark. We need humility to accept how differently God made every one, and to be thankful that we have entered into the spiritual true church.

THE DEPICTION OF THE WILDERNESS

Our time together in the ark is likened to taking a spiritual journey, just as the Israelites walked in the wilderness, eating the same food and drinking the same drink. In fact, we are also the same.

In the time of prophet Jeremiah, the people of Israel strayed from God. Many times, God called out for them to return, and He even told Jeremiah to shout and cry into the ears of the people until they awakened. He wanted to stir them up because God also remembered their time in the wilderness:

I remember you,
The kindness of your youth,
The love of your betrothal,
When you went after me in the wilderness,
In a land not sown. (Jer 2:2)

The Israelites were closest to God during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and the love they had for God during that period of time was what God remembered most. Even though they stopped recognizing God afterwards, He still remembered them.

We are all born of the same spirit, and the path that the Israelites took in the wilderness is also the same spiritual journey for us today. All these things that happened in the past serve as our examples, and they are written to admonish those of us who now live as the ages come to an end (1 Cor 10:11).

Walking Together and Walking Alone

In the Psalms, there are many hymns written about this journey to encourage the sojourners to persist along the path of salvation. The eighty-fourth psalm particularly describes our pilgrimage.

From verses one to four, we see the heart of the people longing and fainting for God. They also longed for the loveliness of God's dwelling place, while their soul, their heart, and their flesh cried out for God.

As they began their journey, they realized that the path would not always be smooth.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in you,
Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of [tears],
They make it a spring;
The rain also covers it with pools.
They go from strength to strength;
Each one appears before God in Zion.
(Ps 84:5-7)

Even though they knew that blessings and abundance awaited them at the end of their journey, they still had to pass through the valley of tears—trials and times of tribulation.

Verse six tells us that they passed through these troubled times together, and they went from strength to strength, helping one another along the way.

We also need to emulate such a beautiful picture of partnership in the Lord and strive to support each other on this heavenly path. We need to be strong for one another, and the entire family of the church needs to draw together to pursue this goal.

If each person goes along his/her own way, the church will be divided and each will become weaker and weaker. Going to the house of God, the Israelites became stronger and increased in number.

This passage also tells us that each one must appear before God individually. Therefore, we must also pursue after God on our own, bear our own responsibilities, and be accountable before Him.

This way, when we cross the valley of tears, we can be a stronghold for those who are weak, and those who are strong can lift us up when our own strength fails.

So when we come to the wilderness, we truly receive the love of God as a family, and we ought to receive it with a thankful heart and make the determination to be a source of support for this household.

This way, when we cross the valley of tears, we can be a stronghold for those who are weak, and those who are strong can lift us up when our own strength fails.

We can now appreciate the importance of entering and remaining in the ark as a family, and we can value the importance of banding together for a common goal in the wilderness. The third scene, then, depicts the glory of God's temple.

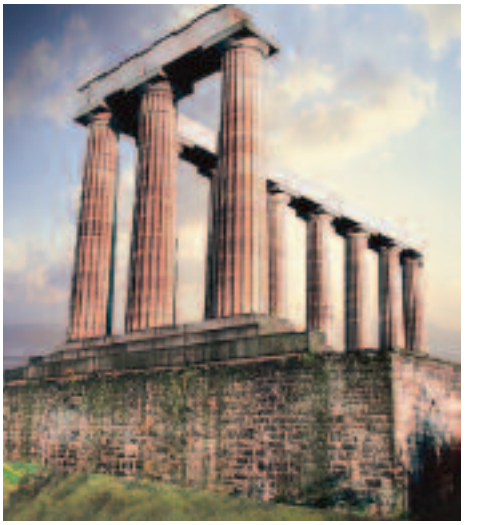
THE TEMPLE'S GLORY

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. (1 Cor 3:16-17)

In this same passage, Paul also writes of an analogy comparing all believers as fellow workers of God's field and His building, and he explains clearly that our foundation is Jesus Christ.

Once Jesus is laid as the foundation, each of us brings something to build up the church. Though the building of this temple began with those that came before us, we are the ones that need to continue its construction and its work.

Some bring gold, some bring silver, and some bring precious stones. Others bring wood and straw. God will test each



one's work by fire when all these are added together. For those whose hearts are true to the Lord, the test of fire will purify them and their labor will not burn up but will become even more refined.

This is a reminder to us that as long as we have faith, love, and a true heart towards God's work, even a little of whatever we can offer will shine golden in His eyes.

Revelation 21 speaks of a new heaven and a new earth, and a new Jerusalem coming from above. This holy city and the tabernacle of God is the true church of the end time (Rev 21:3). We don't have to wait until we die to receive heaven.

Now, then, if you were to draw an honest picture of the church and the family of believers in your area of worship, what kind of picture would it be?

Even while we are on this earth, we have the tabernacle and temple of God with us. Before we enter the eternal heaven, which is the most perfect and beautiful place, God will allow us to taste the wonder of His tabernacle in the church.

When we come together in Christ, we dwell with one another in His temple and strive to build upon His church. That means that each of us are a part of this church and we are joined with Christ.

Therefore, whether we are receiving glory or shame, we receive it together. We should have this common attitude because this is how we build up the body of Christ and take part in the final glory of God's temple.

Let us strive to preserve the temple of God that lives in our bodies, so that our part in the church will be a source of strength that edifies all believers and bring praises to God.

OUR GATHERING

If teachers and counselors want to understand the condition of a child's family situation, they tell the children to draw a picture of their family together. In fact, picture-drawing is a tell-tale sign to understand what's really in the hearts of our children.

If the parents in the family are not strong together, the child will naturally draw Mommy and Daddy far apart. Or perhaps Daddy would be much bigger or smaller than Mommy—indicating how big or small of a role that parent plays in the child's life.

Now, then, if you were to draw an honest picture of the church and the family of believers in your area of worship, what kind of picture would it be?

All of us have a picture in our mind of what the perfect church ought to look like. In fact, it would be very similar to the three pictures we conjured up together of the ark, the wilderness, and the temple. But we would probably draw an adjusted version of the perfect church picture.

The church is really the family that God has given us, which make up His body with Christ as our head. But just like our own family, we don't have a say of who we are related to. There are some members that we are really proud to be associated with, and there are some that will always make us worry and not be able to sleep at night.

Nevertheless, we continue to love them and bear with them. Flesh and blood will always be flesh and blood. Now, even more so, as we are without an excuse because we are joined together in His flesh and in His blood!

Therefore, let us never cease to bear with one another in God's love, and let us continue to refine the painting of the body of Christ and make it a masterpiece worthy of His appraisal. ★

A Warm Church

Audrey Chan—Leicester, United Kingdom

I remember going on holiday to the United States some years ago. As with most holidays, there was a lot of travelling involved and an obligation to fit in as much sight-seeing as time would allow.

It was good that it was punctuated with a visit to a local church for a service. The atmosphere was lovely, and the brothers and sisters were genuinely welcoming and friendly. Sitting in the chapel and taking part in the services, I felt I had come home.

Now, as I reflect on that experience and others since that time, I feel that the climate of a church is so important. A warm church is a good place for the congregation and is also welcoming to friends searching for the truth. It is an indication that all is well in the community of faith, the members are at peace with one another, and everyone has the resources and capacity to extend their love to others.

Every local church can be a warm church. There is no secret—it is merely about each of us having an awareness of who we are, and making time to grow close, to be proactive, and to show love.

AN AWARENESS OF WHO WE ARE

I grew up in a church where members made a habit of calling each other 'Brother' and 'Sister'. I think this is a good practice because each time we say these words, we are reminded that we are members of the same family and that we belong to the household of God (Eph 2:19).

When we take time to reflect, it is truly amazing that we, as a group of people from such diverse backgrounds, can come together. In other circumstances, we might never have met. But because of the perfect gospel and the precious blood of Jesus Christ we are joined as a community of faith (Acts 20:28). We have great things in common, sharing all the 'ones' that the apostle Paul famously talks about in his letter to the Ephesians: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father (Eph4:4-6).

Whether we celebrate each other's company or merely tolerate one another depends on whether we have an awareness of our special identity. If the former, then this melting pot of personalities, cultures, and backgrounds will have no problems brewing harmony and love.

Fortunately, God has given us time to practice and to get things right. As we worship and serve God together, we should be mindful to not only focus on the act or task at hand. For running in parallel is a lesson in interpersonal relationships—a lesson that challenges us

to develop Christ-like qualities such as patience, forbearance, humility, and respect for others (Eph 4:2-3; Phil 2:1-4).

One day, and by the grace of God, all the hard work and practicing will end, as we go together to the heavenly kingdom. This is both a joyous and a sobering thought—reminding us to live out the family spirit here on earth, for there will come a time when we will spend an eternity together.

MAKING TIME TO GROW CLOSE

Last year, a national UK survey confirmed findings of what many people had long suspected: church attendance within the general Christian community in the UK is at an all-time low, and professing belief in God while opting out of active church attendance is now officially the norm rather than the exception. Increasingly, people do not see the need to fellowship and bond together in the faith.

The church is part of God's gracious plan for us, and it is an important resource for all to access. By coming together in fellowship, we can offer and receive encouragement and teaching (Heb 10:25), and we can grow together spiritually. Isolated faith and lone journeys do not have a place in God's plan.

In fact, God never intended for each of His believers to walk alone on the journey of faith. Every Christian needs encouragement and support. Moreover, a lone Christian can be vulnerable to attacks from the devil (1 Pet 5:8).

When we read the book of Acts, which gives an account of the development of the early church, we are left with a distinct impression of a community that thrived on fellowship. Members took hold of every opportunity to not only worship in the temple, but also to spend time together breaking bread in each other's homes (Acts 2:46). God rewarded their unity of spirit by adding to their numbers on a daily basis.

Today's church will do well to take lessons from the early church. It needs to foster opportunities for its members to grow in Christ and to grow together in unity. It can do this by creating different ways for worship and fellowship that are responsive to the needs of local congregations.

There is a place for formal services, but there also needs to be opportunities for smaller scale and informal gatherings where members can study the Bible together, pray, share the grace of God, and discuss the ministry of the church.

Fellowship is foremost about worship, but it is also an opportunity for members to develop good communication, mutual understanding, and a family spirit.

BEING PROACTIVE

Being proactive is a key ingredient for a warm church. It is where members have a realization that they are not guests or strangers, but rather fellow citizens in the household of God (Eph 2:19). Their actions show that they understand what needs to be done, and that their role counts. There is no need for coaxing and pushing, for everyone is happy and willing to play an active part in church life.

We can all make a conscious effort to be proactive. The basic requirement is to have the heart to serve God, and to ask God continually to inspire us to do so. Then we open our ears and eyes to anticipate and to see what needs to be done.

Members don't always have to be proactive on a grand scale. It can be manifested in the smallest of ways—the greeting of a visitor who enters the chapel for the first time, opening a door for someone, or offering a listening ear to someone who has had a difficult week.

Being proactive is a key ingredient for a warm church. It is where members have a realization that they are not guests or strangers, but rather fellow citizens in the household of God (Eph 2:19).

At the other end of the scale, it might entail volunteering when there is a need for workers in various aspects of the church ministry.

Being proactive may sometimes take courage, especially if it involves paving a culture change within a local church. But with God's help, one good action will spark another—potentially igniting the whole church.

Leading By Example

Leadership is also important where key workers have a vital role to play, both in fostering an environment that build up proactive members and by leading the exemplary way (1 Pet 5:3). If leadership wasn't important, the Bible would not include specifications for good ministers (cf. Acts 6:3; Tit 1:7-8).

The adage, "actions speak louder than

words" was Apostle Peter's encouragement to key workers to set a good example for the congregation (1 Pet 5:3), for often the congregation will take its cue from the leaders of the church. The latter, therefore, are key players in developing a healthy Christ-like culture within the church for fellowship.

How sad if workers were to carry out their appointed tasks, however avidly, but with indifference to the members. It would be a case of missing the point.

SHOWING LOVE

Within the church, there are members who are rich and members who are poor; some who have generally peaceful lives and others who have more than their share of problems; and some with good mental and physical health while others are without. This diversity of circumstances gives plentiful opportunities for the Christian community to show love. For if everyone was the same, there would be little or no reason to extend our helping hand.

The Bible reminds us that we are all one body in Christ and calls us to love one another without partiality (Eph 4:4; 1 Jn 4:7; Jas 2:1-5). We all know this in theory, but this is probably one of the most challenging aspects of Christian living.

Life is busy, time always seems short, and showing love—properly showing love—can be demanding on our schedule, energy, patience, or more. It is often easier to live our own separate lives and assure ourselves that we will do good when we have more resources.

Yet the Bible urges us that the time to show love is now. It teaches us to not only look out for our own interests, but for the interests of others (Phil 2:4). It inspires us to actively do good to our brethren and to not grow tired in doing so (Gal 6:9-10).

And there is a reward for those who show love unconditionally to the community of faith: they will grow spiritually and learn the truth of what Jesus meant when He said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Act 20:35). The fact is, showing love is evidence that God's grace is more than sufficient in our lives, and it is also evidence that we realize we can only love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19).

The fact is, showing love is evidence that God's grace is more than sufficient in our lives, and it is also evidence that we realize we can only love because God first loved us.

The early church applied love in very practical ways. It shared its wealth, helped widows, practiced hospitality, and gave aid to poorer congregations (Acts 2:44-47, 4:32-35, 6:1-6, 9:36-42, 11:27-30; Phm 7; 1 Cor:1-3). From their example, we understand that love is literally not in word or speech, but in deed and in truth.

Every local church can be a warm church. It just needs everyone working together to make it happen, and the end results are rewarding.

A warm church is good for the congregation because everyone can feel what it's like to be in God's family—an anticipation of what is to come in the heavenly kingdom.

It is also positively good for evangelism. Friends seeking the truth will come into our midst and be drawn by both the gospel and by our works of love, which is the gospel in action. They will see that we love one another and that we belong to Christ (Jn 13:34-35), and they will want to be part of this wonderful community.

What a powerful way to preach. ★

The Body of Christ

Jason Hsu—Baldwin Park, California, USA

Apostle Paul said, "[N]o one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church" (Eph 5:29).

Learning about the body of Christ has many important teachings for us. It speaks to us of God's great love for His people, and this love was prepared in Christ from before the foundation of the world.

Hopefully, by examining the "what," "how," "when," "where," and "why" of Christ's body, particularly through apostle Paul's writings, we will gain a clearer insight into the teachings of the body of Christ.

WHAT IS THE BODY OF CHRIST?

The simple answer is, of course, Christ's physical body. But on a deeper level, Ephesians 1:22-23 tells us:

[God] put all things under [Christ's] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

In other words, the body of Christ is the church.

Andrew Jackson once said, "One man with courage makes a majority." Though it is somewhat of a generalization, modern culture tends to place a high value on the contribution of the individual.

Even when there is an inherent "team" concept, like basketball, people often still focus more on "star players" and individual statistics. And if, unfortunately, a player does not perform well statistically, that player might then be cut from the team.

But, this is not the way it is in God's church, for the church body is not a collection of individuals but a unity of members.

The Bible says that there would be no body if there was only one member

(1 Cor 12:19). No doubt, a strong building requires the support of individual pillars (Gal 2:9). Yet, we would not consider a structure consisting simply of pillars as a building. Likewise, the church body requires every member to be considered a complete structure.

Apostle Paul says, "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ" (1 Cor 12:12).

Weak Members are Necessary

The interdependency of the members of the body tells us all members of the body are necessary—even the weak members. In today's cruel world, we might think it better to sever a weak member than to let a weak member become a pull on the whole body.

But a weak member of the body is not like a cancer we can unthinkingly cut out from the body. Members that appear to be weaker are actually necessary for the functioning of the body (1 Cor 12:22).

Apostle Paul illustrates this interdependency of the church body through a somewhat unusual illustration dealing with the presentable and un-presentable parts of the body (1 Cor 12:23ff).

We can ask ourselves: isn't it true we often fixate more on the un-presentable parts of our body than on the presentable parts? This is how it is with Christ's body. It is the weaker members that we must strengthen and care for so that there is no division in the church.

In this spirit, apostle Paul encourages the strong to "bear with the [weaknesses] of the weak" (Rom 15:1). For example, it is our right to eat whichever food we desire, but if our right causes another to stumble, we should learn to forego our rights in love. To care is to nurture, not destroy. It is to build up the body in love, which is the purpose of each of its members (Eph 4:16).

HOW WAS THE BODY OF CHRIST ESTABLISHED?

On the night Jesus was betrayed He took the bread and, when He had given thanks, He broke the bread and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you" (1 Cor 11:23-24).

So in order to establish the body of Christ, the Lord gave up His body and His blood (Heb 10:4-10). Life is in the blood, and by giving us both body and blood, Christ demonstrated the fullness of His love to His redeemed.

A full understanding of how Christ established us means we will no longer consider ourselves our own, for Jesus purchased us at a very high price. In Acts 20:28, Paul exhorts the elders to "…shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Colossian 1:14: "…in whom we have redemption through His blood." Also, in 1 Corinthians 6:15, 19-20:

[D]o you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?…do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

When we realize we are His own, we will no longer live carnally. When we start to live for Him, we will find our mission and our purpose in God: "For [we] died, and [our] life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3).

To care is to nurture; not destroy. It is to build up the body in love, which is the purpose of each of its members (Eph 4:16).

WHEN WAS THE BODY OF CHRIST ESTABLISHED?

God treasured the love of His people like a husband would treasure the love of his wife in her youth (Jer 2:2). In fact, His love even surpasses this type of love because God's love is everlasting (Jer 31:3).

Although God's people repeatedly suffered for their unfaithfulness and sin, God always kept His promise of restoration in view (Ezek 16:15-52, 60-63). God may have seemed far away from them, but His intention for His people was always one of restoration and redemption. This is God's love.

For your Maker is your husband
The Lord of hosts is His name;
And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel;
He is called the God of the whole earth. (Isa 54:5)

So as we answer the question, "When was the body of Christ established?" we must realize God's love surpasses time and space; it surpasses the forty or fifty years a husband might have to cherish his wife. Before the foundation of the earth ever was, the Lord's body was already prepared for the redemption of His people (Heb 10:5ff). The elder Peter understood these things when he wrote:

[Y]ou were not redeemed with corruptible things…but with the precious blood of Christ…He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for you. (1 Pet 1:18-20)

Through this body, He wants us to accomplish His purposes, and to grow into a complete person and to the full measure of the stature of Christ.

WHERE IS THE BODY OF CHRIST?

We know that God's kingdom does not just exist on earth—it exists on two levels: (1) in heaven and (2) on earth. Jesus says that when we pray, we pray: "Let Your kingdom come. Let Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10).

But if we were to look for the actual body of Christ on earth, we'd be as disappointed as Mary of Magdalene was at the empty tomb (Jn 20:11-15), because it has ascended to heaven (Act 1:9-11). But since the church follows the pattern of Christ, we know where His body is by understanding His death, His resurrection, and His ascension.

Christ did not ascend into heaven immediately after His resurrection but remained on the earth for forty days (Acts 1:3; cf. Rev 20:6, 14). Thus, after the Lord's death and resurrection, the church, the body of Christ, remains on the earth.

Although Christ is in the heavenly places and seated at the right hand of God, we, who were raised with Christ and seated in the heavenly places with Him, remain here (Eph 1:20; 2:5-6).

In John's vision of the new Jerusalem, the new Jerusalem descends down from heaven but it rests on the earth, where the tabernacle of God rests with men, and the nations of the world enter through its gates (Rev 21:2-3, 10, 26; Jer 3:17).

After His ascension, Christ gave gifts to men to edify this body. Through this body, He wants us to accomplish His purposes, and to grow into a complete person and to the full measure of the stature of Christ (Eph 4:8-13, 15).

WHY THE BODY OF CHRIST EXISTS

Understanding "why" Christ's body exits is important. Practically speaking, it helps us grasp the pattern and path of our present purpose and future glory as Christ's body. Though there are many aspects to this question, we will examine three:

To Complete Itself

If we are blessed enough to have all our limbs functioning and whole, do we ever wonder how it would feel to one day suffer the loss of our arm or leg through an accident? How would we live?

To feel incomplete in our life or purpose is, in many ways, worse than being physically incomplete. To not know the direction of our growth or how to function is worse than missing a limb and still know how to carry on. Sometimes in life, we just don't know how to continue on—particularly in suffering.

Apostle Paul taught us: if one member of the body suffers, all the members suffer with it (1 Cor 12:26). This is an important principle to understand before we can answer why the body exists, because it relates back to the essence of Christ's body as a unity of members. If we do not understand the interdependency within the body, we will not know how to continue on as the body; we will not know how to live.

A person knows they are alive because they change and grow and mature, and hopefully for the better. It's natural for a person to want to feel complete in one's self at the end of his/her days.

Therefore, part of the answer to why the church exists is to learn to become a whole person. That is, the church body should understand itself—the inter-dependency and harmony of its members,

its purpose, and how it can feel complete in God's grace.

To Complete All in Christ

For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. (1 Cor 15:21-22)

Apostle Paul was commissioned to preach to the nations, for the Gentiles were without hope and cut off from the commonwealth of Israel (Eph 2:12; 3:8). This was accomplished through the blood of Christ in His flesh (Eph 2:13, 15; cf. Heb 2:14).

Today, Christ's body exists as evidence of the fellowship and administration of the mystery of Christ, and this was revealed to the apostle that all may be made complete in Him (Eph 3:9-11). This is what apostle Paul calls the "whole family" in heaven and earth (Eph 3:15, cf.1:10). This is what we call the body of Christ, as it exists on the two levels.

The purpose of God for the church is to make all things complete, to make all things whole, and to make one new man from the two (Eph 2:15, 4:13). Paul calls this the "eternal purpose" (Eph 3:11). But how do we accomplish this unity of making one new man from the two?

To Reveal God's Love for His Body

The strongest of loves in this world is the love between husband and wife (Eph 5:25ff).

When apostle Paul spoke of such love, however, he was speaking of the mystery of love between Christ and the church. He also said the love of Christ surpasses all knowledge, and its dimensions immeasurable (Eph 3:18-19).

The answer to how we make one new man from the two, how we make what was incomplete complete, and how we make the body of Christ whole is answered in this word: love. Christ's love makes the church whole (Eph 4:15-16, 5:25).

Earlier we asked: if we are blessed enough to be whole, and one day we suffered the loss of our limbs, how would we survive? How would we continue?

If Christ so loved us that He gave us everything, should we not know how to love His body?

Without love, it would be difficult. We might give up hope on life itself. For without love, how can anyone continue?

A body without life is dead. When Christ gave us His body, He also gave us His blood—He gave us everything. That is what it means to love, because even if we give up our whole body to be burned, but have not love, it means nothing because we have not given the most important part of ourselves (1 Cor 13:3). So without love, we cannot complete the answer to "why" the body of Christ exists.

Today, as God's people, we are Christ's body. As His body, we must also have His life, which Christ gave us by giving us His blood. This is how He gave us His all. If Christ so loved us that He gave us everything, should we not know how to love His body?

When Christ ascended above, He gave gifts to men, and we received them. But we must not only give of our many gifts, we must also give of our love. May the Lord grant us strength through His spirit so we may complete what is lacking in the body of Christ. Amen. ★

"Can I Influence My Children?"

Patricia Chen—Irvine, California, USA

Parent: "*I said it's time to put your toys away.*" *(No response)*
"*I'm going to count to three.*" *(Slience)*
"*One, two, three…three…three. Did you hear what I just said? I said it's time to put away your toys, brush your teeth, say a prayer, and go to sleep.*" *(Voice raised)*

Child: "*Okay, I heard you but I'm still playing, can you count again?*"

Does this sound familiar?

Parenting indeed is a challenging job. We try our best to guide our children but it feels like they are the ones who are controlling us. Sometimes, they don't even seem to hear what we are saying. Most North Americans believe that parents have less influence on their children than school and the media. With their busy lifestyle, some parents assume daycare, school, and television programming play the primary roles in molding their children.

Even at church, some parents are buying into the myth that there is little they can do to shape the lives of their children. Subsequently, we have lost confidence in raising moral kids.

DO I REALLY HAVE INFLUENCE OVER MY CHILDREN?

I remember before we had our child, my husband and I were very concerned about what kind of parents we would be. Even today, we constantly explore the Bible and see what the word of God teaches us about parenting. Sometimes, I feel overwhelmed just thinking about all of the dangers and uncertainties my child will face as he grows up. I fear for his safety, but most of all I fear for his soul, mind, and spirit.

The fact is, the world we live in has lost its moral compass. The media thrive on unrealistic and dangerous messages that can easily defile our purity. When our children fill up on movies with immoral images, violent television, or music with profane lyrics, they will be adversely affected.

Nevertheless, as I continue to search the Scriptures and pray, I am convinced that God offers help and strength to any parent who wants to grab hold of these fleeting years to mold the next generation.

Behold, children are a gift of the Lord;
The fruit of the womb is a reward.
Like arrows in the hands of a warrior,
So are the children of one's youth,
How blessed is the man who quiver is
full of them;
They shall not be ashamed,
When they speak with their enemies
in the gate. (Ps 127:3-5)

I refer to our time as fleeting years because, as parents, we do not own our children. God has said that they are gifts and rewards, and He has only entrusted our children to us for a brief window of time. So the day we release our children, our arrows, we must release them into the world without letting our fears hold us back. When we let them go, they need to be prepared to aim toward the right target, like real warriors.

Moses' Parents and Their Hall of Faith

Take the example of Moses' parents. We can learn precious lessons about taking every opportunity to raise our children from a couple that lived four thousand years ago.

What set them apart was their perception of God's vision for their son. First of all, they risked their lives for their baby because they realized that he was not an ordinary child. Being fearful of the Pharaoh's mandate to extinguish every first-born male, they bravely went against the king's orders and hid baby Moses for three months (Heb 11:23). What a faith they must've had to devise such a plan for Moses' rescue!

Standing on the river bank, they released their baby into God's guidance as he waded across the water. Much to their surprise, God intervened immediately and brought him to the Pharaoh's palace. Moses' mother, seeing such a grand opportunity, offered to be a caretaker to this adopted baby of the royal family. Over the years, she taught him all the ways of God and raised him as a true Israelite. This was her hall of faith.

So the question is: "Do I really have influence over my children?" Yes, we can significantly influence our children with godly values and directions. Undoubtedly, teachers, grandparents, friends, the media, and society will also influence our children's lives, but it is God's purpose for parents to carry out this title role, and we need to bravely assume it.

While we are raising young children or teens, we might not know what our children will grow up to be. But with God's guidance, we can raise them with the wisdom, strength, and vision that come from God. [God] already knows their purposeful life. So it is our duty as parents to help our children discover the amazing plans our heavenly Father has prepared for them.

Our goal is to divide and conquer—one attitude and one behavior at a time.

WHAT SHOULD A PARENT DO?

As a parent, one of our goals is to raise our children to be morally and socially responsible. Eventually, they will go to college. At that time, will they do the right thing even after they have left our supervision? With God's vision and with persistent prayers, they will, because of what has been instilled in them in their upbringing.

According to many studies, a child's primary relationship is with his parents in the first phase of life. Children care a great deal about what their parents think and do. Basically, from infant to about pre-adolescence, their lives circle around their parents.

Then, there comes a point during adolescence where the primary relationship shifts from parents to friends as they learn to interact socially. Some parents fear letting go. However, it is healthy for them to learn to interact with others in a mature and constructive way. The more assuring way to do that is to have confidence that we have influenced them in a godly and spiritual manner over the years.

Sometimes, we will feel inadequate in one way or another in influencing our children's lives. But focus on a few areas at a time. God yearns for us to make Him our foundation, upon whom we build our children's faith. Even though many Christ-like qualities bear so little impact in our society today, we know that they matter tremendously in the kingdom of God.

There seem to be so much to work on: submission to parents and to God, obedience, respect for authority, growth in their faith, wisdom, courage to do the right thing, self-discipline, integrity, moral purity, overcome temptations, love, perseverance, a heart of discernment between truth and falsehood. The list can go on.

Rather than overwhelming ourselves, we can choose several areas to focus on because certain topics become more relevant than others depending on the age and the maturity of the child. Our goal is to divide and conquer—one attitude and one behavior at a time.

From Infancy to Pre-adolescence: Setting Rules, Guidelines, Boundaries, and Discipline

For young kids, the first step is to mold their character while their will is more bendable. Some parents set rules and guidelines for behavior. I always tell my child to "listen and obey Mommy and Daddy." By that, I want my child to respond immediately and respectfully. Of course, this is easier said than done because most children will rebel some of the time, and especially the strong-willed child. But parents should instill in them what obedience is all about.

When my child was younger, he always challenged me by playing before doing homework. It took us a long time to instill in his heart what obedience is—doing things without complaining.

Memorizing Bible verses is also a power tool for young children. When they memorize and learn the verses in the early years, it will survive them through the turbulent teenage years. We don't need to have a doctorate degree in theology in order to teach biblical concepts to our children. Children have very simple faith, and they just need to believe the words of God and obey His teachings.

One of the worst things that can happen to a child is parents who send mixed signals about what is acceptable or unacceptable. This usually happens early on because one parent may have experienced a stern upbringing and the other a tolerant childhood. As a result, they resist doing the same thing to their own children and end up with incongruent expectations.

What we want to achieve as parents is to agree on one set of family rules and reinforce them over and over again, especially at a young age. Of course, it takes a lot of patience and hard work. But it is something that will pay off in the long run.

From Pre-adolescence to Young Adults: Fostering Loving Relationships and Responsibility, and Making Wise Decisions

At about 12 or 13 years of age, it's as though our child is constantly telling or hinting to us they want the freedom and power to make decisions. The little child we embraced in our arms for years now thinks he is like an adult and he wants to have some control of his fate.

No wonder many parents feel they have already lost when it comes to the battle of raising teenagers. One thing we need to keep in mind at this age is that the peer group has become the most important influence to our children. Also, peer pressure from friends forces them to seek an identity of their own.

The question, then, is what do we train at this age? Reinforcing rules is still very important. Otherwise they will not have any structure in their lives. But remember that, behind rules, we have to have a good relationship.

One close friend of mine told me that her parents always told her "No" without giving her a reason. When asked about a rule, instead of saying, "Because I say so," explain the reasons behind it. Teenagers want to know the why's behind the rules before they follow it. Otherwise, it can turn into rebellion.

Always be there and tell them how much you love them. Don't assume they know it. When they get all the love they need from us, they won't turn to the world to satisfy their needs. If we have been setting aside time during the day in which we pray with them when they were young, this should also continue as they step into their adolescence.

Young people have a desire for responsibility. It is a sign that they are starting to grow up. Give them more chances to make decisions about what they want to do with their free time. Start out with small decisions. See how they decide and what they choose. Once they show themselves faithful in small matters (like going out with their friends and coming home on time), we can allow them to make bigger choices. One parent told me that their teenagers always come home on time because they have learned to respect their parents and be responsible at a young age.

Always be there and tell them how much you love them. Don't assume they know it. When they get all the love they need from us, they won't turn to the world to satisfy their needs.

One of the biggest tasks is to teach our teenagers how to make wise choices. Listen to what they have to say after they've made a bad choice. Ask, "Well, if you were in the same situation again, would you do the same thing? Why or why not?" Give them wise advice. Go back and talk about those issues so that they can make better choices going forward in their lives.

The biggest struggle as parents is deciding what types of decisions they are allowed to make. For example, let's look at dating at an early age. Most parents will agree that they are too young or not mature enough. We need to tell them the proper time to date and why we want them to refrain from dating. When we see them grow in a mature and responsible way, then we can let them make almost all the decisions about life in their late teens.

PASSING ON OUR FAITH

Paul wrote: "I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother

Things To Consider Before Marriage

FF Chong—London, United Kingdom

From the Bible, we learn that it is God who institutes and ennobles marriage. It is God's plan for a man and a woman to come together and to find happiness in each other. Since it is sacred, we have to realize what God expects of us in our marriage.

Marriage is not something we can try out for a while and exchange or refund if it doesn't work out. So, prior to entering into a marital relationship, there are biblical teachings that we have to consider.

God knew Adam's deep need for a partner. He therefore created a woman, Eve, to fulfill and help him in his life (Gen 2:18). The creation of Eve was part of the profound truth of marriage.

God did not create Eve out of dust so that Adam would not consider her as a separate creation from him. Rather, He shaped Eve from one of his ribs. She was brought to Adam, who instantly knew who she was (Gen 2:23)—she was a part and an extension of him. For this to be possible, he needs to know enough about her.

TALK THINGS OUT

It is always important for a couple to understand one another. However, the focus of understanding should not be on unrealistic discussions of how much wealth they will earn, and neither should it be founded on emotional love.

When we are considering weather someone is suitable for us, we have to be able to separate what are primary and what are secondary factors affecting our decision. Considerations such as pleasure, beauty, figure, wealth, fame, education, and social status are secondary. Any motive for marriage that does not stem from God's principles may bring tragedy to the marriage itself.

Rather, consider whether or not this person is compatible with you. As a wife, are you willing to set your heart to help this man in his faith, health, home, work, and life? Is he someone you truly desire to help? As a husband, are you determined to cherish this woman life-long? Do you put your trust in her and love her the way you would love yourself?

Premarital understanding includes coming up with a joint decision on how to face up to challenges after marriage. It is always good to spell them out one by one, if possible. It also includes being honest with your future partner about your health. Do not hide anything that will affect your marriage later. Sometimes, frankness hurts, but it's always the best way forward.

Accepting a spouse-to-be's sickness presents a real challenge. If you still truly love your future partner, despite what is told, then you should pray to God or consult someone who you think can help, bearing in mind that you may have to live with the sickness life-long. This requires lasting and genuine love on your part.

When talking about love, it should not be confined to romantic expressions alone. The foundation of marital love is the love of God, agape, without which the eros would not last. The principle of love is nothing less than the perfect virtues of Christ, which were enunciated by Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13:4-8). Many marriages fail because they lack the virtues of love to sustain them.

True love in marriage is the result of having adopted Christ's love and not the mere cliché of "I love you." The two great characteristics of Christ's love are being sacrificial and submissive. He sacrificed for the church and submitted to God's will.

True love for each other can rarely be seen prior to marriage. It is what is done for the other party when the two live together. It is an expression of a down-to-earth attitude.

More time should also be spent on discussing the weaknesses of each other in truth with love. This gives your potential spouse a fair idea of what type of person you really are. This is to prepare each other psychologically before living together.

True love is giving and not expecting anything from the other. You should know that this is a practical issue and should not think that it can be easily done. When true love is not the motivation in marriage, giving is more a burden than a joy.

The lines of communication must always be free from interruption. Love does not insist on one's own way. Love is to please your spouse within the boundary of the Bible, and marriage must be kept intact in Christ Jesus by the best effort of both.

Do not expect the other party to provide what you want all the time. Since marriage is a divine contract in which two persons enter, and after you have talked things out, you should do your best to live up to the expectations of the other.

ACCEPT AND DO YOUR PART

This brings us to the subject of the roles and relationships between a husband and a wife in marriage. A role is the part that one plays in the story of marriage. When you do not know your role, unnecessary complications will arise. You can stumble over barriers that you can't remove.

A marital relationship is delicate. It can be easily affected by the role you play. But when you are willing to adhere to the role spelled out in the Bible and to accept the responsibility of that role, you will enjoy a fulfilling and satisfying marriage. You'll also have a good story to share with others.

As the Wife

The phrase "she is a woman" is not a declaration of inferiority to men. Rather, it is an honest recognition of the differences between the sexes. Realizing these differences is absolutely fundamental to fulfillment in life and marriage.

In this modern society, the role of women has changed. A wife may have to work in order to help provide for the needs of the entire family, and working mothers are becoming more and more common. But she still cannot neglect her role as a mother and a wife.

In this regard, the husband may have to help with the household chores and childcare. This is to share the workload and prevent overstraining his wife (Eph 5:22-33).

In God's design, a wife has been fashioned to take the role of subjecting herself to the husband. If the motivation is not from the understanding of God's word and adoption of biblical virtues, submission is more a torture than joy.

The truth of submission on the wife's part reveals the clear roles of both the husband and the wife. She should submit to her husband (within the scope of the Bible) as much as she would to the Lord. She must always be willing to do so even though it might require sacrifice.

A marital relationship is delicate. It can be easily affected by the role you play.

One might ask this fundamental question: "Why is a wife willing to submit to the Lord?" For a start, the Lord gives instructions that benefit not Himself, but to those who adheres to them. In other words, the reason for a husband wanting his wife to submit to him should not be for himself but for the benefit of the wife and the entire family.

In the process of building up a godly marriage, the wife needs to supplement what is lacking in the husband (Remember, the husband is not Jesus, though he merely strives to imitate Him). Wifely duties include comforting the husband when he is down, advising him when he has gone astray, and praying unceasingly for him (which the husband should also do for his wife).

As the Husband

The husband should do as much as possible in his daily living to show that he genuinely loves his wife. In order for a wife to be submissive, the husband should imitate Christ as closely as possible and to act Him out in his life. This is to ensure that whatever he does or brings into the marital relationship can be edifying and sanctifying to the marriage and to the family.

In this light, respecting and cherishing the wife forms part of the role of the husband. If the husband is taught to respect his wife, would not the wife all the more respect her husband? "Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them" (Col 3:19).

The love of the husband for his wife is explained by Paul as loving his own body and giving all glory to her (cf. 1 Cor 12:23-24). When a husband is lacking in Christ's love, his love for his wife is also inadequate. And it will increasingly be impossible for him to love his wife consistently.

The husband must care for the wife and embrace her as the weaker vessel, and he must not have an exaggerated expectation of his beloved. He is to love his wife as Christ loves His church. The direct and immediate punishment from God to a husband who does not honor his wife is that his prayer goes unanswered.

Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Pet 3:7)

Keep in mind that God determines the role a wife and a husband each have to play. He has placed the responsibility of the family unit upon the shoulders of the husband, and the wife is to help him.

Within the marital relationship, both are needed to yield to the commands of Christ and will eventually be accountable for what has been done.

GROW UP TOGETHER

For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. (Gen 2:24)

The teaching implies the requirement for a man to mature as he steps into marriage.

What makes a marriage successful is that every couple...will approach and enter into marriage with the biblical principles as their foundation.

To get married is to be independent, though the verse does not connote a severance of familial ties with the parents of either parties. To leave the parents indicates the beginning of a new phase of life, with the wife being the most important person apart from God. And the love of Christ for the church should be a model and a real experience in his marriage. Mentally, he is prepared to live with his wife in a reasonable manner.

As for a woman, she must likewise know the biblical reason for marrying her husband. In becoming a good wife, she needs to know that it is essential for the church to respond to the sacrificial love of Christ—she needs to learn the virtue of submission.

The other considerations such as family-sustaining income and education are necessary but they are not absolute requirements to a happy marriage.

Though the Bible does not specify when a man or a woman can get married, apart from the general guidelines, you have to think carefully about it.

There are members who got married when they were still students. They rented a room for themselves and worked part-time to sustain their livelihood. Though they may toil, which they should have expected, they lived joyously and served the Lord diligently. Some others, even after marriage, received direct financial support from the family.

Every marriage exists under unique conditions. A case of successful marriage may not be suitable or applicable to another situation. What makes a marriage successful is that every couple must be very clear, before marriage, what conditions they are in and how they will approach and enter into marriage with the biblical principles as their foundation.

The things of the world are ever changing and temporal, but the principles of God remain true to those who show genuine commitmenttowards one another in marriage. To those who believe and hang on to His promises, He blesses them with wonderful stories of love. ★

TRUE JESUS CHURCH

Kumalawaty Sundari—Jakarta, Indonesia

The ark of the end times
Rebuilt upon the foundation of truth,
Unveils the way of salvation—
Equips herself with the power of the Holy Spirit.
Joyfully she praises Jesus her Christ,
Establishing a sacred matrimony,
Solemnly promising to bind herself, His bride—
Undefiled; coming before His holy throne,
Sanctified and blameless, a radiant church.
Covenant-entrusted, she accepts her part—
Hallowing and fulfilling His mission,
Unabashedly preaching the gospel in His authority,
Reaching out to souls the world over.
Confidently longing for her consummation;
Her moment to ascend and unite with her Bridegroom.

Call For Articles

Author Guidelines & Editorial Calendar

Manna is looking for certain types of articles, or article genres. Each genre constitutes a different subject matter and writing approach. If you are planning to write an article (regardless of topic), please try to adhere to one of the genres below.

Christian Living
A *Christian Living* article gives practical biblical guidance on real-life issues and how to use Jesus' teachings in our daily lives. Article length: 1500-2000 words.

Bible Study
A *Bible Study* explores a passage or character from the Bible and draws out the teachings for readers to apply to their lives. Article length: 2000 words.

Doctrinal Study
A *Doctrinal Study* examines an aspect of True Jesus Church beliefs and may present it in comparison to other beliefs. Article length: 2000 words.

Exhortation
An *Exhortation* encourages and admonishes the reader in different aspects of the Christian faith. Article length: 1500-2000 words.

Testimony
A *Testimony* recounts an experience in the Lord that will encourage and edify the reader. Article length: 1000-1500 words.

Creative Writing
Creative Writing pieces include poems, parables, or short stories that illustrate a biblical teaching or idea. Keep in mind as you're writing: how will this edify the reader?

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Please email electronic files of articles (Word, Wordperfect, ASCII text) to manna@tjc.org, or send hardcopy and disk to:

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Anaheim, CA 92804 USA
Please direct any questions to manna@tjc.org or
Phone: +1-714-533-8808
Fax: +1-714-533-8878

In your submission, please include your name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number even if you wish to remain anonymous.

Issue #49
Theme: The Family Altar
Articles due: May 31, 2005

What is the importance of building a family altar in our own homes? What does the Bible teach about raising godly children? What are some practical ways in which we can draw closer together as a family unit?

Issue #50
Theme: The One True Church
Articles due: Aug 31, 2005

What does the Bible say about the manifestations of the one true church? How do we know we are the true church? And what steps must we take to build up this church as we wait for the second coming?

Issue #51
Theme: Spiritual Renewal
Articles due: Nov 30, 2005

How do we become spiritually renewed, and what is the process of becoming a new creation? What does the apostle Paul teaches us about renewing our spirit, and why is it so important in these last days?

In your submission, please include your name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number

GENERAL WRITING GUIDELINES

CONTENT

- Content should be biblically sound and adhere to biblical principles.
- Article should be organized and have a logical flow of thought.
- The main point or teaching of the article should be clear to the reader.
- Readers should be able to apply what they have read to their daily lives.

GRAMMAR/STYLE

- Use active instead of passive voice.
- Write concisely.
- Use concrete words and ideas instead of abstract concepts.
- Use "plain old English" instead of obscure, academic language.
- Use the NKJV version when quoting Bible verses.
- Use American spelling, if possible.
- Adhere to the IA Style Guide, except for He/Him when referring to God/Jesus.

True Jesus Church

Articles of Faith

Jesus the True God

The One True God was manifested in the flesh. He is the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for the redemption of sinners, was resurrected on the third day, and ascended to heaven. He is the only Savior of mankind, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and the only True God.

Holy Bible

The Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible are inspired by God and are therefore the only authentic scriptures which testify to the Truth.

Church

The True Jesus Church was established by our Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit (the Latter Rain) and is the revival of the True Church of the Apostolic Days.

Salvation

Salvation is given by grace through faith. However, it is necessary to rely on the Holy Spirit to pursue holiness and to keep the biblical teachings of honoring God and loving humanity.

Baptism

The Baptism of Water is the sacrament for the remission of sins and for regeneration. The baptist must already have received baptisms of water and the Holy Spirit. The baptism must be immersion in natural, living water and must be administered in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the candidate's head facing downward.

Foot Washing

The Washing of Feet is a sacrament which enables one to have a part in the Lord and teaches mutual love, holiness, humility, service, and forgiveness. The sacrament of the washing of feet must be performed in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ to all newly baptized members. Mutual washing of feet may be practiced when necessary.

Holy Spirit

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a prerequisite for entering heaven; speaking in tongues is the evidence of having received the Holy Spirit.

Holy Communion

The Holy Communion is the sacrament to commemorate the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It enables us to partake of the flesh and blood of our Lord and to be in communion with Him so that we may have eternal life and be raised on the last day. This sacrament should be held as often as possible. Only one unleavened bread and grape juice should be used.

Sabbath Day

The Sabbath Day, the seventh day of the week (Saturday), is a holy day, blessed and sanctified by God. It is to be observed under the Lord's grace for the commemoration of God's creation and redemption and with the hope of eternal rest.

Judgment Day

The Lord Jesus Christ will descend from heaven on the Last Day to judge all people; the righteous will receive eternal life, while the wicked will be eternally condemned.

TRUE JESUS CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information on the True Jesus Church, contact us or visit us on our website. We look forward to hearing from you!

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